

SUN LIFE

The strategy for the Natura 2000 Network in Umbria

LAYMAN'S REPORT



Beneficiario Coordinatore



Regione Umbria

Con il contributo di



Life13 NAT/IT/371



NATURA 2000



SUN LIFE UMBRIA

With the SUN LIFE project, ended in September 2018, the Umbria Region defined an integrated, unitary and coordinated strategy of the regional Natura 2000 network aimed at the sustainable development of the territory compatible with the conservation of biodiversity – the variety of plant and animal life in a particular environment.

Spatial planning is a valuable tool for reconciling nature conservation with a more integrated and sustainable territorial development, taking into account the inseparable relationship between biodiversity, landscape and culture.

■ The SUN LIFE project, co-financed by the EU through the LIFE+ Programme, lasted 4 years and had a budget of € 2,344,702 (with the European Commission contribution to 50%).

The LIFE Programme

Established in 1992, the LIFE financial instrument is the European Union fund entirely dedicated to environmental projects. For over 25 years, the LIFE Programme has been contributing to the conservation of biodiversity and the integration of the environment into other policies in all EU member States



Above Common water frog (Gianluca Bencivenga)

On the left The Sordo river (Daniela Gigante)

Cover photo Environmental mosaic, Castelluccio di Norcia (Daniela Gigante)





The Natura 2000 Network

Natura 2000 is the ecological network established by the European Union to guarantee the conservation of biodiversity in all member States.

It includes the sites designated according to the Habitat Directive and to the Birds Directive: “Special Areas of Conservation” (SACs) and “Special Protection Areas” (SPAs), established to conserve or restore natural habitats and species populations of flora and fauna that are at risk of disappearing.

The Natura 2000 Network currently covers over 1 million km² of the EU territory!

Natura 2000 in Umbria

The Umbria region, in the heart of Italy, is among the smallest Italian regions but its territory is very heterogeneous and rich in biodiversity.

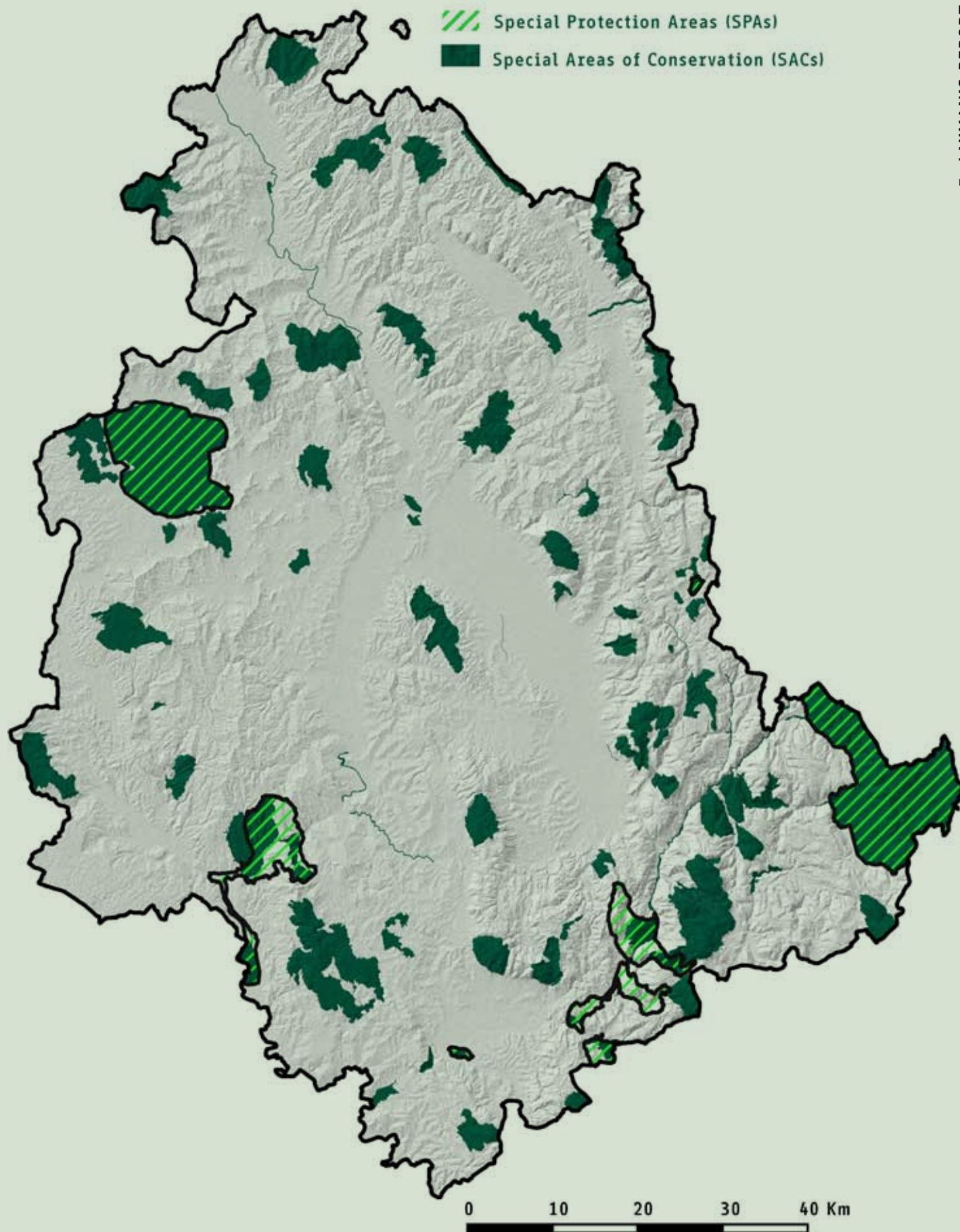
From the modest reliefs of the western areas with the large lake basin of Trasimeno, to the Apennine chain that marks the eastern sector, where the rough and tormented calcareous orography reaches the highest altitudes in the area of the Sibillini Mountains. The two sectors are separated by the articulated valley system of the Tiber River and its basin and the Umbrian valley that crosses the region from north to south.

The Natura 2000 Network, with an extension of 140,000 hectares, covers about 15% of the regional territory and plays a primary role in protecting the natural wealth of Umbria.

Natura 2000 in figures

102 Natura 2000 sites: 5 SPAs, 97 SACs hosting:

- 41 habitat of community interest, including 11 priority
- 143 animal species (4 priority) and 8 plant species



Localization and extension of Natura 2000 sites
in the regional territory



THE RESULTS OF THE SUN LIFE PROJECT

Through targeted actions, the SUN LIFE project has completed an analysis and a number of surveys to improve the **KNOWLEDGE** on the current status of the regional Natura 2000 network. It has developed documents and projects aiming at an integrated and effective **MANAGEMENT** of the Natura 2000 network, involving stakeholders through their **ENGAGEMENT** to ensure long-term results.

KNOWLEDGE

Analyse the conservation status of Habitats and species and the value of the Natura 2000 Network in Umbria

Design a detailed picture of the effects on the N2K sites deriving from local and supra-local planning tools

MANAGEMENT

Ensure efficient and integrated management of the regional Natura 2000 network

Pursue, even after the project deadline, the prioritised actions identified at regional level

ENGAGEMENT

Engage young people and increase green jobs by encouraging the sustainable development of the territory

Engage other sectors in the management of the Network (other sector policies, agriculture, forestry and civil society)



KNOWLEDGE

**What is the conservation status of habitats and species in the Region?
What can we do to monitor it effectively?**

The scientific monitoring program

Biodiversity monitoring is an essential step in achieving regional, national and European protection objectives. For this reason, the preparation of protocols and guidelines for monitoring is a fundamental step for the formulation of actions to protect habitats and species, especially for those that are in critical condition.

For this reason, the SUN LIFE project, produced:

- Three guidelines for monitoring animal species,
- A Guideline for monitoring plant species and habitats,
- A germoplasm collection and donor areas protocol,
- An online diagnostic manual.

What is the value of biodiversity in Umbria?

Assessment of the value of the ecosystem services of the Natura 2000 network in Umbria

An ecosystem is the set of living organisms of flora and fauna that interact with each other and with the environment and which provide services to humanity, such as the production of food, drinking water, materials and fuels.

The ecosystem services represent the “multiple benefits provided by ecosystems to humankind.” Based on the results obtained from the research carried out, it is estimated that the annual return in terms of ecosystem services in Umbria can be quantified at around € 100,000,000!

Grasslands in Monte Civitelle (Daniela Gigante)



Are current planning tools suitable for biodiversity protection?

Planning tools analysis

In order to conserve and improve the quality of the Natura 2000 sites system it is essential to verify and evaluate the contents of the programmatic documents that express the paths of the future layout of the regional territory.

The analysis confirmed the difficulty of integrating the environmental component into spatial planning, especially at the local scale, with urban expansion forecasts that could create problems not so much within the Natura 2000 sites, but in their immediate vicinity. It is very important to understand that the Natura 2000 network does not exclude the presence of human activities, but rather encourages coexistence between man and nature. The aim of Natura 2000 is not to preserve islands of naturalness but to create an ecological network of sites to conserve habitats and species that inhabit them and that move between them. It is therefore essential to defend the sites of the Network and to guarantee the ecological connectivity between them.



What professional skills are necessary?

Analysis of green jobs and jobs connected to the Natura 2000 network

The most recent survey on the labor market in the Rete Natura 2000 areas of Umbria recorded an increase of almost 5%. The jobs linked to Natura 2000 are not just new professions but refer also to new abilities to interact and communicate. An example can be represented by multifunctional farms, where agriculture, environmental education, reception and enogastronomy interpenetrate. The Natura 2000 network offers significant opportunities for the near future in some key sectors, in particular in relation to ecotourism.

Black kite (Gianluca Bencivenga)



MANAGEMENT

What are the actions to be taken to ensure the effective management of the Natura 2000 Network in Umbria?

The management strategy for the Natura 2000 Network in Umbria

The strategy was drawn up on the basis of the results of all the project's actions. It will be for use by regional officials and citizens, as a strategic basis for the management of Natura 2000 in Umbria. The definition of eight macro-objectives and related actions represents the heart of the document in its strategic and orientation role:

1. Optimization of regional network management
2. Management and conservation of the habitats of Annex I to the Habitats Directive
3. Management and conservation of the species of Annex II, IV and V to the Habitats Directive and of Annex I to the Birds Directive
4. Management of alien species
5. Review of municipal planning tools towards conservation, expansion, restoration of ecological connectivity between habitat patches
6. Management, conservation and requalification of the landscape in its relationship with biodiversity
7. Promoting green jobs related to the Natura 2000 network
8. Improve awareness and information on the value of Natura 2000 areas and on ecosystem services

Marten (Archivio Studio Naturalistico Hyla)



How much does the achievement of these goals cost?

The financial plan for the management of the network

The average annual expenditure calculated for the period 2007-2015 was around € 57 per hectare. The Financial Plan elaborated within the project considered the costs to be incurred for the N2K management in the period 2017-2023, identifying the financing channels, with a view to rational management of time and resources. The annual cost of managing the network has been quantified at around € 11 million per year. This amount corresponds to € 85.9 per hectare per year. Considering that the annual return in terms of ecosystem services can be quantified at about € 100,000,000, for the Umbria Region, as for the EU, the costs incurred in the past and to be incurred in the coming years have served and will serve to preserve a value much higher for the benefit of all citizens.



What are the priorities?

Updating of the Prioritised Action Framework (PAF)

The Prioritised Action Framework of the Umbria Region presents the priority actions for the planning of the multi-year management of the Natura 2000 network and the related financial coverage.

The definition of funding priorities will promote the best use of the limited financial resources available for the management of the Natura 2000 network and will facilitate the achievement of conservation objectives for habitats and species.

Oaks, Collestrada (Mauro Frattegiani)



What do we want to achieve in the next few years?

Two LIFE proposals

The future of the Natura 2000 network depends on the ability to bring together financial resources on concrete land management objectives, combining the various needs: conservation, production, housing, etc. This is why the path taken by the SUNLIFE cannot and must not stop here.

On the basis of the priorities identified in the management strategy and in the regional PAF, two new project proposals were presented under the LIFE Programme:

- LIFE ECORETE: to restore and maintain ecological connectivity between the Natura 2000 sites
- LIFE Com-Ap: to involve the Agricultural Communities in the realization of a virtuous model of sustainable agriculture.

The logical framework of products

Management Strategy

PAF

ECORETE

COM-AP

ENGAGEMENT

What was the collaborative approach within the regional administration?

The Natura 2000 Group

During the project, 8 meetings of the Natura 2000 Group were held, a regional administration task force made up of representatives from all the offices involved and interested in managing the Natura 2000 network. The aim of the meetings was to share the objectives and strategic choices, products, results, possibilities for future collaborations.

How did we engage the main users of Natura 2000 sites?

Guides for farmers and foresters

The guides illustrate in a simple and immediate way what farmers and foresters can do to conserve biodiversity during their daily activities. The guides consider the important role of agriculture and forestry for the conservation of habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network in Umbria and provide the operators with information and advice for the management of agricultural and forestry activities with a view to environmental sustainability.



How did we engage citizens?

The communication campaign and the participated process

The SUNLIFE project has widely disseminated information on the Natura 2000 network and its benefits throughout the region. The project completed a series of awareness raising and communication tools:

- The project website
- An information brochure about the project
- An information brochure on Natura 2000
- Z-cards
- A practical guide to Natura 2000 sites
- A Press-kit for journalists
- Press releases followed by numerous articles published in newspapers and magazines of regional and national relevance
- A scientific publication for the dissemination of project results

Furthermore, a participatory process was carried out through 10 territorial meetings during which the draft of the management strategy of the Natura 2000 Network in Umbria and the guidelines for farmers and foresters were shared. The indications emerged have been integrated into the products produced.

The meetings were attended by 228 people belonging to associations, farms, centers of environmental education / educational farms, accommodation / tourism, municipalities, fishermen's cooperatives, Proloco but also public bodies, entrepreneurs, professionals and trade unions / trade associations.

Iris (Daniela Gigante)

How did we involve the students and teachers?

Activities with students and teachers

The SUNLIFE project wanted to dedicate specific activities to the new generations, to promote the awareness towards environmental issues and the value of biodiversity from an early age. For the little ones, a series of activities were carried out, such as meetings, guided tours, play and educational materials, which involved 200 classes for a total of 4006 students.

To make communication more effective, the teachers were also involved, both through the presentation of the project and through a specific training activity.

For the older students, especially of professional institutes, activities have been aimed at the orientation towards the “green” jobs, that is the jobs related to the conservation of nature and biodiversity. Approximately 200 students and their teachers were involved through 4 meetings. A Guide has also been created that identifies the green jobs with the largest market in Umbria and provides the tools to find an occupation.



The large blue butterfly (Silvio Sorcini)

To the right Beeches, Sellano (Mauro Frattegiani)

How did we relate to other projects and initiatives

Networking activities

The project partnership has participated in numerous conferences and events in Italy and other European Countries to illustrate the methodologies and results obtained by the SUNLIFE project and to share good practices and experiences with other projects and related initiatives.



Lessons learned

- The collective and harmonious commitment of different skills and professions is essential for effective strategic planning for the protection of biodiversity
- The administrations and the managing bodies of the sites are called to make responsible choices to guarantee the conservation of nature in the long term
- The value of the Natura 2000 network and the ecosystem services it guarantees far exceeds the management costs necessary for its maintenance
- Citizens and, above all, the young generations show a keen interest in environmental issues and are ready to spend themselves for the protection of natural assets
- There are great prospects for economic and professional development linked to the conservation of nature that must be supported and promoted through dedicated initiatives

What's next?

- There is still much to do to deepen the knowledge of the conservation status of habitats and species and the dynamics underway
- Environmental issues need to be better integrated into other sector policies to ensure sustainable land development
 - Protecting biodiversity within Natura 2000 sites is essential but not sufficient: it is necessary to promote ecological connections between sites to ensure that the natural heritage can flourish
- The participatory process aimed at sharing strategies and priorities is fundamental for the success of policies and must be carried out through a structured path over time
- The Natura 2000 Network is still unknown to many. It is important to continue to spread the role of the ecological network in the protection of biodiversity as a collective value and as a driver of development

All SUN LIFE products are available on our website:
<http://www.life-sun.eu/>

The project partnership

Umbria Region

responsible for the project, manages all the Natura 2000 regional sites, based on national legislation (Presidential Decree 357/97). He coordinated all the activities carried out within the project and adopted the strategic documents produced.

Comunità Ambiente

a company with experience in the conservation of nature at EU level, with particular reference to the creation of the Natura 2000 network. It has overseen the operational management of the project, monitored the progress of the actions and produced some dissemination products.

University of Perugia

Department of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences (DSA3)

involved in research activities in the agricultural and agri-food economy, territorial and environmental assessment, environmental management and planning. It produced all the documentation for the analysis and financial planning of the project.

Department of Chemistry, Biology and Biotechnology (DCBB)

involved in research activities concerning the study and management of biodiversity, flora, fauna, vegetation and habitats and the conservation of nature, Protected Areas and N2K sites. It has overseen all the analysis products and strategic actions for the protection of biodiversity in Umbria.

University of L'Aquila

Department of Civil Engineering, Building-Architecture, Environmental (DICEAA)

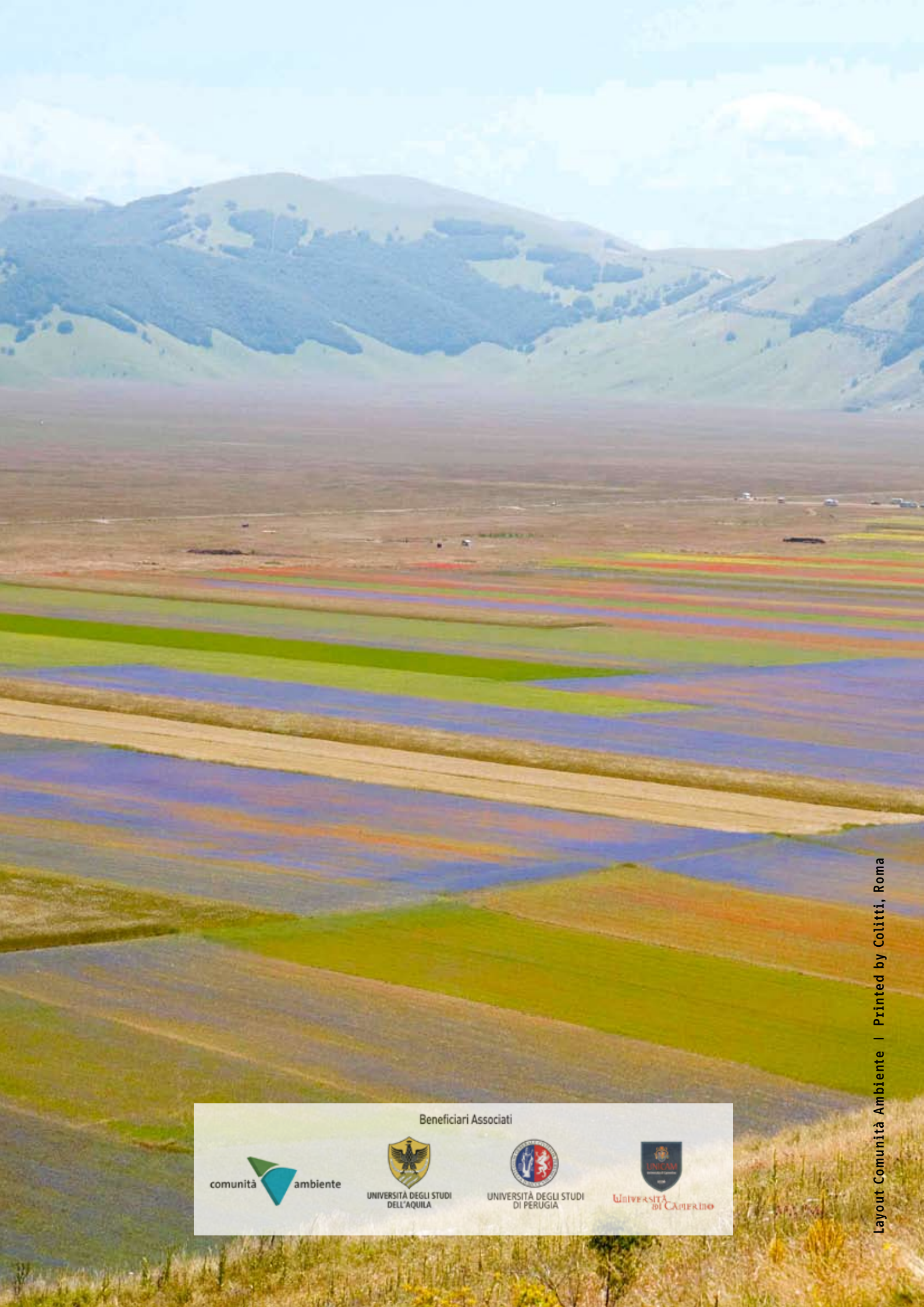
collaborates with public bodies and non-profit organizations to substantiate public awareness actions and territorial management policies. It has taken care of the aspects of regulatory consistency above all in relation to the respect of the ecological connection between the sites of the regional Natura 2000 network.

University of Camerino

School of Architecture and Design (SAD)

involved in research activities in the fields of environmental, territorial and urban planning, protected areas and landscape, with particular attention to the relationship between landscape and biodiversity. It has dealt with all the strategic actions related to the protection of the landscape in its cultural and biodiversity value.





Beneficiari Associati

